

Delivering on a promise made to catastrophically disabled veterans to lift the burden of costly co-payments, and working to support those who care after our men and women injured in battle, last evening Congress passed landmark legislation authored by Rep. Debbie Halvorson (IL-11) to eliminate co-payments for catastrophically disabled veterans and support caregivers of veterans. The legislation is now awaiting the President's expected signature.

"When my stepson, a captain in the Army Special Forces, was injured in Afghanistan - I spent time at Walter Reed looking after him and interacting with other families. I spoke with so many other loved ones who were beginning the second battle - the battle to rehabilitate. It's a battle not just borne by our brave soldiers, but by their families as well. And I came away from that experience resolved to help our caregivers and soldiers recuperate with all of the resources possible. They deserve no less. This legislation thanks them for their service, and provides new assistance to help them live their lives after their enormous sacrifice on behalf of our freedom," said Halvorson.

"Our catastrophically disabled veterans are now one pen stroke away from never having to worry about expensive co-payments ever again, and from achieving the peace of mind and security they deserve. Our caregivers are one pen stroke away from receiving the support that they need-support that matches the support they give to our veterans. I am proud to have authored and worked pass these two important bills, and once they become law, we can all be proud of what they'll do to support our veterans."

The legislation, S.1963, Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act, passed the House on Wednesday and the Senate on Thursday, and contained two major pieces of legislation written by Halvorson. The first bill, H.R.1335, the Disabled Veterans' Health Care Fairness Act, will eliminate co-payments and other fees from catastrophically disabled veterans who receive medical or nursing home care from the Department of Veteran Affairs. As the first piece of legislation Halvorson introduced in Congress, H.R.1335 will provide peace of mind and financial security disabled veterans, allowing them to focus on their health and wellbeing.

Also included in the bill and authored by Halvorson was H.R.2898, the Wounded Warrior Caregiver Assistance Act. This legislation will authorize the Department of Veterans Affairs to provide support services to those taking care of our wounded warriors. These support services include caregiver training, counseling and mental health services, and respite care for family and other caregivers of all veterans, giving them the help they need to help our men and women who have served. It also provides health care and a stipend for caregivers living with severely wounded veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan. Both pieces of legislation had previously passed the House before being incorporated into the final omnibus package.

In addition to provisions authored by Halvorson, S.1963 contains expanded and improved VA health care for the 1.8 million women who have served in the armed forces, including up to seven days of post-delivery health care to a new born child of a woman veteran. The legislation passed also includes additional resources for health care for veterans living in rural areas by expanding transportation for veterans to local VA hospitals and clinics through VA grants to local Veterans Service Organizations.

Supporting the efforts voted on by Halvorson to fight for our veterans, veterans advocacy organizations such as the Veterans of Foreign Wars have stated that this legislation will, "make a profound difference to veterans", while the American Legion said it, "offers bold solutions to major challenges facing service members, veterans, and their families."

The final vote in favor of S.1963 was unanimous in both the House and the Senate. To find out more about Congresswoman Halvorson's record on veterans, [click here](#) .